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Our  
Christmas  
Tides

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1918

To  
My very dear Friends  
Mr and Mrs. Cothran

with the wish that they may  
enjoy many happy Christmas-tides

Thos. L. Couper

December 1907 }

**OUR CHRISTMAS TIDES**

**Dr. Cuyler at Lake Mohonk—1903** ·

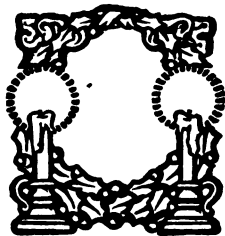
# Our Christmas Tides

BY

**THEODORE LEDYARD CUYLER**

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Life," "Help and Good Cheer," "God's  
Light on Dark Clouds," etc., etc.



**The Baker & Taylor Co., Publishers**  
33-37 East 17th Street, **New York**

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Published September 1904

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1918

The Plimpton Press Norwood Mass.

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A  
Merry Christmas  
to You

**O**F all the joyous festivals during the round year, Christmas is the king. It commemorates the most important event in the history of the world, nothing less than the advent of the Son of God into human form. He became flesh and dwelt among us; and we beheld His glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. The Incarnation is the foundation truth of Christianity. It has been wisely said that, "If we eliminate the in-

carnation of Christ, our religion becomes only an emotional morality associated with the name of Jesus, of whom we speak in the language made sacred by long use and early association." That song of the heavenly host, over the hills of Bethlehem, was the sweetest music that our sin-troubled world has ever heard.

Christmas, therefore, takes rank above all the sacred festivals. It is interwoven with the most devout Christian thought and with family life throughout Christendom. Children hail it as their especial jubilee. It is the season of gifts and glad greetings; and he must be a lonely creature who, outside of a prison wall, has no one to wish him "a merry Christmas!" The New Testament does not mention the exact date or day of the birth of Jesus Christ. Accordingly there has been no little controversy about the exact

time. Some Bible chronologists insist that it was in May, others in September, and the Latin Church fixed the day near the close of December. It was not until nearly the close of the Fourth Century that we hear of a celebration of Christ's nativity; but when the custom began, it soon spread among all the different branches of the Church. At first it was made a day of solemn worship, like the Sabbath; churches were opened, and the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was celebrated; servants and working people were allowed a day of rest, and all public games of a secular character were prohibited.

The custom of observing Christmas came into England with the introduction of Christianity. Three masses were performed: One at midnight, one at daybreak and one later in the morning. After the Reformation in Great Britain, in the Sixteenth

Century, the Protestant Established Church continued the observance of Christmas day,—at first with devout religious services, but very soon adding various festivities of a somewhat jovial character. The Puritans, in the days of Cromwell, and the Presbyterians in Scotland and Ireland, regarded these on-goings with a sort of holy horror. One of the Puritan writers exclaims: “Our Christmas lords of misrule, together with music, mummeries, and dancing and such other Christmas disorders now in use with Christians, were derived from Roman saturnalia and Bacchanalian festivals which should cause all pious Christians eternally to abominate them.” In our modern times Christmas is observed in England with great enthusiasm, not only by all those connected with the Established Church, but by vast numbers of “Nonconformists” also. Many

of our older readers will recall Washington Irving's charming descriptions of the festivities which he witnessed there during his visit to an old-fashioned rural mansion of a typical English Squire. The Christmas Eve was ushered in with the celebration of various old games, such as "hot cockles, bob-apple and snap-dragon."

The Yule Clog and Christmas candles were lighted, and the mistletoe, with its white berries, was hung up both in the hall and in the kitchen. It was the privilege of young men to kiss the young maidens under the mistletoe, plucking each time a berry from the bush. The Yule Clog was a famous part of the Christmas Eve entertainment. This was a huge log of wood, brought into the house with great ceremony, laid in the fire-place and lighted with a brand of last year's Clog. While it lasted there were songs and stories and all sorts

of merriment. Candles were lighted also in the mansion; but in the cottages of the peasantry the only light was from the bright blaze of a rousing fire. The Yule Clog was to burn all night; if it went out it was superstitiously regarded as a portent of bad luck.

The ancient custom of "Christmas Waits" is still popular in England. Late on Christmas Eve parties of young people go around the village, or neighborhood, and sing, before the houses of their friends, familiar carols. A most popular one is that commencing:

**"Hark! the herald angels sing,  
Glory to the new-born King."**

The Christmas morning began with the singing of carols. Troops of children marched about the villages chanting various lively roundelays. Mr. Irving, at the old ancestral hall,

was awakened by a choir of children's voices singing outside of his chamber door a carol the burden of which was :

**“ Rejoice, Our Saviour He was born,  
On Christmas Day in the morning.”**

This was repeated before the door of every bedroom in the house. As soon as the family and their guests were dressed they all assembled in the chapel, connected with the mansion, such as I have seen in ancient baronial halls and castles. Prayers were read and a Christmas carol was sung to a quaint old melody. When the bell of the village church sounded out its lively notes, the squire and all his guests and retainers joined with the villagers in the annual service, which was enlivened with plenty of resounding anthems, accompanied by the organ and other musical instruments. After-

wards the congregation had a hearty hand-shaking and the children ran about crying: "Ule, ule, ule!" and singing various rude rhymes.

Of course the Christmas dinner was a most formidable feast. A gray-haired harper twanged his harp while the guests gathered to the banquet. After grace was said, the butler marched into the dining-hall, bearing a silver dish, on which was an enormous boar's head, decorated with rosemary, and it was placed on the table with great ceremony and flourishes of minstrelsy. A brimming loving-cup was passed around the board and the "wassail" was partaken of by everyone, standing. The protracted feast was followed, in the evening, by lively games and stories, and often by a dance, in which, as John Bunyan describes the dance of his Pilgrims, after the destruction of Doubting Castle, they "footed it handsomely."



Our British kinsfolk evidently enjoyed their Christmas conviviality; and some of the features of their festivities are still in vogue—especially among the residents of Northern Europe. The famous Norwegian navigator, Nansen, in his thrilling description of the expedition for the discovery of the North Pole, gives a piquant account of the first Christmas, when their vessel was fast locked in Arctic ice. Outside, the thermometer stood at thirty-six below zero, but in the cabin all was merriment and good cheer. The menu of their dinner embraced ox-tail soup, fish pudding, roasted reindeer, with cranberry jam; and the dessert included Christmas cakes, “marshpain,” coffee, figs, almonds and raisins. He says: “We could hardly have been better off at home.” If Arctic cold could not chill the Christmas spirit, neither could the far-away loneliness of the

Pacific coast. The favorite story of sea life, in my student days, was Richard H. Dana's "Two Years Before the Mast," which had much of the charm of "Robinson Crusoe." Dana's vessel was collecting hides on the coast of California, when that coast was in a semi-civilized condition. He thus describes the Christmas among the crew: "As there were no hides to take in, and nothing especial to do, the Captain gave us a holiday, the first we had had except Sundays since leaving Boston; and we had plum-duff for dinner. The crew of the Russian Brig, lying alongside us, following the 'old style,' had celebrated their Christmas eleven days before, when they had a grand 'blowout'; and (as our men said) 'had drunk, in the fore-castle, a keg of gin, ate up a bag of tallow and made a soup of the skin.!' " Certain it is that Christmas is the one universal festival the

round world over; and every resident of a Christian land carries Christmas in his heart wherever he may go.

My own boyhood was spent in a delightful home on one of the most beautiful farms in Western New York—an experience that any city-bred boy might envy. We had no religious festivals except Thanksgiving Day and Christmas, and the latter was especially welcome, not only on account of the good fare but its good gifts. Christmas was sacred to Santa Claus, the patron saint of good boys and girls. We counted the days until its arrival. If the night before the longed-for festival was one of eager expectation in all our houses, it was a sad time in all barn-yards and turkey-coops and chicken-roosts; for the slaughter was terrible, and the cry of the feathered tribes was like “the mourning of Hadadrimmon.” As

to our experiences within doors, they are portrayed in Dr. Clement C. Moore's immortal lines, "The Night Before Christmas," which is probably the most popular poem for children ever penned in America. As the visits of Santa Claus in the night could only be through the chimney, we hung our stockings where they would be in full sight. Three score and ten years ago such modern contrivances as steam pipes, and those unpoetical holes in the floor called "hot-air registers," were as entirely unknown in our rural regions as gas-burners or telephones. We had a genuine fire-place in our kitchen, big enough to contain an enormous back-log, and broad enough for eight or ten people to form "a circle wide" before it and enjoy the genial warmth.

The last process before going to bed was to suspend our stockings in the chimney jambs; and then we

dreamed of Santa Claus, or if we awoke in the night, we listened for the jingling of his sleigh-bells. At the peep of day we were aroused by the voice of my good grandfather, who planted himself in the stairway and shouted in a stentorian tone, "I wish you all a Merry Christmas!" The contest was as to who should give the salutation first, and the old gentleman determined to get the start of us by sounding his greeting to the family before we were out of our rooms. Then came a race for the chimney corner; all the stockings came down quicker than they had gone up. What could not be contained in them was disposed upon the mantle-piece, or elsewhere. I remember that I once received an autograph letter from Santa Claus, full of good counsels; and our colored cook told me that she awoke in the night and, peeping into the kitchen, actually saw the veritable

old visitor light a candle and sit down at the table and write it! I believed it all as implicitly as I believed the Ten Commandments, or the story of David and Goliath. Happy days of childish credulity, when fact and fiction were swallowed alike without a misgiving! During my long life I have seen many a day-dream and many an air-castle go the way of Santa Claus and the wonderful "Lamp of Aladdin."

In after years, when I became a parent, my beloved wife and I, determined to make the Christmastide one of the golden days of the twelve months. In mid-winter, when all outside vegetation was bleak and bare, the Christmas-tree in our parlor bloomed in many-colored beauty and bounty. When the tiny candles were all lighted the children and our domestics gathered round it and one of the youngsters re-

heard some pretty juvenile effusion; as "they that had found great spoil." After the happy harvesting of the magic tree in my own home, it was my custom to spend the afternoon or evening in some mission-school and to watch the sparkling eyes of several hundreds of children while a huge Christmas-tree shed down its bounties. Fifty years ago, when the degradation and miseries of the "Five-Points" were first invaded by pioneer philanthropy, it was a thrilling sight to behold the denizens of the slums and their children as they flocked into Mr. Pease's new "House of Industry" and the "Brewery Mission" building. The angelic host over the hills of Bethlehem did not make a more welcome revelation to them "who had sat in darkness and the shadow of death." In these days the squalid regions of our great cities are being explored and improved by various methods

of systematic beneficence. "Christian Settlements" are established; Bureaus of Charity are formed and Associations for the relief of the poor are organized. A noble work; but, after all, the most effective "bureau" is one that, in a water-proof and a stout pair of shoes, sallies off on a wintry night to some abode of poverty with not only supplies for suffering bodies, but kind words of sympathy for lonesome hearts. A dollar from a warm hand with a warm word is worth two dollars sent by mail or by a messenger-boy. The secret of power in doing good is *personal contact*. Our incarnate "Elder Brother" went in person to the sick chamber. He anointed with His own hand the eyes of the blind man and He touched the loathsome leper into health. The portentous chasm between wealth and poverty must be bridged by a span of personal kindness over which the



footsteps must turn in only one direction. The personal contact of self sacrificing benevolence with darkness, filth and misery — that is the only remedy. Heart must touch heart. Benevolence also cannot be confined to calendars. Those good people will exhibit the most of the spirit of our Blessed Master who practice Christmas-giving and cheerful, unselfish and zealous Christmas-living through all the circling year.

## **⓪ Little Town of Bethlehem**

**O** LITTLE town of Bethle-  
hem,  
How still we see thee lie!  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep  
The silent hours go by.  
Yet in thy dark street shineth  
The everlasting light;  
The hopes and fears of all the years  
All rest in thee tonight.

O morning stars, together  
Proclaim the holy birth!  
And praises sing to God the King  
And peace to men on earth.

**For Christ is born of Mary  
And, gathered all above,  
While mortals sleep the angels keep  
Their watch of wondering love.**

**How silently, how silently,  
The wondrous gift is given !  
So God imparts to human hearts  
The blessings of His Heaven.  
No ear may hear His coming ;  
But in this world of sin  
Where meek souls will receive Him  
still,  
The dear Christ enters in.**

**Where children pure and happy  
Pray to the blessed Child,  
Where Mary cries out to Thee,  
Son of the Mother mild,  
Where Charity stands watching  
And Faith holds wide the door,  
The dark night wakes, the glory  
breaks,  
And Christmas comes once more.**

O holy Child of Bethlehem,  
Descend to us, we pray!  
Cast out our sin, and enter in,  
Be born in us today.  
We hear the Christmas angels  
The great glad tidings tell;  
O come to us, abide with us,  
O Lord Emmanuel!  
Phillips Brooks.

## A Day at Bethlehem

**T**HERE is one day in every year when the eye of Christendom is turned towards the bright little town which stands on the hilltop about five miles south of Jerusalem. No one visits Palestine without also visiting Bethlehem. There is one railroad in the Holy Land, it leads from Joppa to Jerusalem; but there is a respectable carriage road down to Bethlehem, and it is not made difficult by either rocks or hills. With a pleasant party of friends (one from Australia and another from a mission-field in India) I set off on a bright morning in May to the little City of David. We

halted at the tomb of Rachel by the roadside; and beside it an old woman was weeping as violently as if the beautiful wife of Jacob had been her own daughter. Then we made a detour to the west and rode to the Pools of Solomon—a wonderful relic of antiquity are those solid stone tanks, the thickest of which measures five hundred and eighty feet. Standing on the stone rim of the principal pool, and looking southward, we saw nothing but a series of wild, rocky, treeless, grassless hills—a perfect picture of desolation. It is hard to realize that those black, barren hills were once terraced and clothed with verdure. It is one of the most startling disappointments to find that so much of Palestine is today as utterly desolate as the summit of Mount Washington. Our ride to Solomon's Pools had brought us to the southwest of Bethlehem and we turned our horses thither, riding

along the side of an aqueduct which looked like a small mill race. It conveys the water from the lower pool from Bethlehem to Jerusalem. Down on our left, in the deep ravine or "wady" of Urtas, were a few acres of rich garden, bright with fig trees, vines and flowers—a sort of oasis amid the desolation. It is cultivated by an European colonist and was originally planted there by one Meshullam. As we drew near to Bethlehem we encountered orange groves and barley fields, almost ripe to harvest. Women were in the fields at work—wearing the same dress that charming Ruth wore when she gleaned for the reapers of Boaz. One can understand how the industrious damsel made a sort of sack out of the bosom of her dress, in which she carried home the ephah of barley.

Bethlehem stands at the eastern end of a lofty ridge, about a mile

long and rising two thousand six hundred feet above the level of the Mediterranean. From its walls we got a superb view towards the east, across the fertile valley, and beyond it the black, desolate Engadi, which overlooks the Dead Sea. Bethlehem and Jerusalem are among the three or four towns in Palestine which are actually growing. The Bethlehemites are mostly Christians; some of them Romanists, a few Protestants, but the majority belong to the Greek Church. An industrious, Yankee-like community they are, too; manufacturing various articles out of olive wood and mother of pearl, in which they drive a brisk traffic. It is said that they carried back \$100,000 from our Centennial Exhibition, held at Philadelphia. So many new edifices have been erected, for convents and other sacred uses, that the town has a very fresh, modern aspect. Yet, in this hallowed



town, which dates back before the boyhood of King David, stands the oldest Christian church-edifice on the globe. A portion of the Church of the Nativity is claimed to have been standing in the days of Constantine, fifteen centuries ago, and we walked among the venerable columns with a sense of awe that is inspired by no other Christian structure in existence. It was old when Mahomet was a baby, and already venerable when Charlemagne wore his iron crown! A well-fed monk, from the adjoining Latin convent, took us down a stairway into a subterranean chamber, or vault, thirty-three feet long and about a dozen feet in width. The walls are of marble, and it is blazing with lamps, which are continually burning, night and day. In the floor stands a large silver star. Around it is a Latin inscription, which, in English, reads: "Here Jesus Christ was born of the

Virgin Mary.” Dr. Geikie tells us that when he first laid his eyes on the sacred spot, he could not keep back the tears, and many another devout soul has been as deeply moved as he was.

Is that glittering compound of white marble and flaming lamps a pious sham? Yes, as far as the marble manger and the splendid decorations are concerned. They are the mere mockery of priest-craft. But on that very spot, or within a very few yards from it, the marvellous event of the nativity of the Saviour of sinners actually took place! There God first became “manifest in the flesh.” The most careful and cultured archæologists are coming to admit that about on this spot once stood an ancient khan that once belonged to the family of King David. There is every probability that the “stable” in which the poor Hebrew mother found shelter, and in which

the infant Jesus first saw the light, was a cave or cellar beneath a khan. The tradition, which goes back to the early centuries, has identified this subterranean chamber with the birth of Christ. While Jerusalem has been turned to ruins, and built over again a dozen times, Bethlehem has never been destroyed or devastated by military sieges. No place in Palestine has suffered so little from violence or vandalism. But the strongest argument for the genuineness of the site is found in the fact that the great Latin scholar, St. Jerome, came here about the year Four hundred. He spent the best part of his laborious life in a cavern close by; and there produced his Latin version of the scriptures called the Vulgate. St. Jerome strongly believed that our Lord's nativity took place in that subterranean chamber, and this fact ought to carry prodigious weight. Nor is

there any other spot that has ever competed with it, and no claim has ever been made in behalf of any other. Dr. Geikie only expresses the judgment of everyone when he declares: "There is no good reason to doubt that in this place the great event associated with it actually took place." We know that the feet of our Blessed Lord once trod the rocky knoll above Nazareth and the soil beside Jacob's Well at Sychar, and the old Roman road that leads from Bethany into Jerusalem. Of those three localities we are fairly certain. It is coming to be acknowledged by the best authorities that the scene of the crucifixion was that skull-shaped elevation north of the Damascus gate. Let us rejoice to believe that we, also, can sing a joyful Christmas hymn in the very town over which hung the Star of Bethlehem, and, approximately, on the spot where the Virgin Mother "brought

forth her first-born Son," while the air above was vocal with the music of the angels.

# To-day in Bethlehem Hear I

From the Greek of John of Damascus, died 754.

**T**O-DAY in Bethlehem hear I  
Sweet angel voices singing:  
All glory be to God on high,  
Who peace to earth is bringing,  
The Virgin Mary holdeth more  
Than highest heaven most holy:  
Light shines on what was dark be-  
fore,  
And lifteth up the lowly.

God wills that peace should be in  
earth,  
And holy exultation:

**Sweet Babe, I greet Thy spotless  
birth**

**And wondrous Incarnation.**

**To-day in Bethlehem hear I**

**Even the lowly singing:**

**With angel-words they pierce the  
sky;**

**All earth with joy is ringing.**

# A Motto for Christmas Giving

**T**HIS is the season for bestowing gifts, and the words "for Christ's sake" are an admirable motto to guide us as to the character of our givings. Over and over again the Master made these three words both a text and a test. Mark tells us that He once said "whoever shall lose his life for my sake, and the Gospel, the same shall save it." The first message to the newly converted Saul of Tarsus was: "I will show him great things he must suffer for my sake." It was for Jesus' sake that those early



disciples bore crosses, made long journeys, endured persecutions, gave up money and time and in many cases life itself.

At this Christmastide, when Bethlehem's manger becomes the center of millions of eyes and hearts, let us ask the pregnant question—What did the Son of God come into this world of ours for? The right answer is: He came to save us from our sins, but chiefly He came to save us from the deadly and damnable sin of selfishness. Self out and Jesus in; that is about the most comprehensive description of true conversion. The one motive that has the power to lift us out of self and to exalt life to its highest point is heart-love for our ascended Lord. "Love me more than houses or land or anybody or anything earthly," was the way Christ put it to everyone who desired to be His disciple. No one is thoroughly converted in these

days until he or she cuts loose from self-righteousness, self-reliance, self-seeking and makes Christ Jesus the undisputed master of the heart. Conversion signifies that self has grounded its arms in its very citadel, and has surrendered the keys to the heart of the conquering Saviour. When people join the church they usually subscribe to some confession of faith; but about the most comprehensive one that any sincere convert can make may be condensed into these words: "I believe that it is Christ's business to save me and that it is my business to serve Christ." Loving Jesus Christ is not a mere sentimental emotion, to be expended in singing songs or in sitting at a sacramental table. The test is intensely practical: "If ye love me keep my commandments." Obedience goes deeper down than faith, and faith is only genuine when "it worketh by love." "Keep my com-

mandments" is the motto to be written on the walls of every prayer room to rebuke the empty rhapsodies of empty professors who indulge in devout talk when their honest debts remain unpaid, and their own children and servants sneer at their religion as a sham. It is not how many solemn promises we make, but how many commandments we obey; it is not how many tears we shed, but how many sins we renounce; it is not how many sacraments we observe, but how many deeds of love we do for our Master and our fellow men—that determines the genuineness of our Christianity. Ever more is the eye of our compassionate Saviour upon us, and evermore is that voice saying to us, "Do this in remembrance of me, do it for my sake."

A great variety of Christmas cards are in circulation about this time. A very appropriate one to hang over

every mantel-piece would be the old familiar words, "Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." That is the sort of socialism taught by our Divine Master. There is, every winter, a fearful amount of pinching destitution among honest, worthy folk who have had sharp losses or who are out of employment. One of the most Christian women in this town has just been to my house with a tale of suffering that could only be answered by greenbacks. Appeals at the door and the purses multiply. Selfishness mutters "there is no end to these calls for charity." Yes, and there will be no end. Every mission-school that asks for gifts to its Christmas table, every hungry stranger that begs at your door for bread, every poor minister or Home-missionary who needs a warm overcoat for his winter's work, every

distressed widow who requires a few dollars to pay her rent, every neglected child running in rags and recklessness to ruin—every one of these is an echo to the loving voice that says “Give to them for my sake; ye will do it unto me.”

There is a sweet story that is so appropriate for Christmastide that I venture to repeat it. Those who have never heard it ought to know it, and certain stories, like Christ's parables, never wear out. That practical German philanthropist, John Falk (whose history ought to be studied in Dr. W. F. Stevenson's “Praying and Working”), established his famous charity-school in Weimar. One of his little orphan boys repeated at the supper-table their usual grace: “Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest and bless the food thou hast provided.” A lad looked up and said: “Tell us, teacher, why the Lord Jesus never

comes!" "Dear child, only believe, and you may be sure that He will come to us some of these times, for He always hears us," said the teacher. "Then," replied the lad, "I will set a chair for Him," and he put one at the table. By and by a knock was heard at the door. A poor traveling apprentice was admitted and asked for food and lodging. The little fellow looked at the stranger for a few moments and then piped out: "Ah, I see now, Jesus could not come tonight, so He sent this poor young fellow in His place; is that the way, teacher?" "Yes, my boy," replied the teacher, "that is just exactly it. Every cup of water or bit of bread that we ever give to the poor and hungry for Jesus' sake, we give to Him. What we do for the least and poorest of our brethren, we do for our Saviour."

Now, before any of my readers spread their Christmas dinners, we

would like to repeat that lad's good hint — set a chair somewhere, today, for your Master; your dinner will taste all the better if you have made some poor man's table smoke with your bounty. Warm somebody else's house and somebody else's heart if you want to have a "Merry Christmas"; and I pray you, do not stop with this holiday season. Determine to have a Christmas all the year round, by giving your Lord and Saviour the best seat at the table in your heart, the first claim on your purse, the ownership of your lives. A life for self is infamy; living for Christ is Heaven begun already. Every cross may be turned into a crown; every sacrifice becomes sacred, or even sublime, the moment that our blessed Redeemer of Bethlehem writes on it: "For my sake."

# A Christmas Carol for Children

By Martin Luther.

**G**OOD news from heaven the  
angels bring,  
Glad tidings to the earth  
they sing:

To us this day a child is given,  
To crown us with the joy of heaven.

This is the Christ, our God and Lord,  
Who in all need shall aid afford:  
He will Himself our Saviour be,  
From sin and sorrow set us free.

To us that blessedness He brings,  
Which from the Father's bounty  
springs:



**That in the heavenly realm we may  
With Him enjoy eternal day.**

**All hail, Thou noble Guest, this  
morn,  
Whose love did not the sinner scorn !  
In my distress Thou cam'st to me :  
What thanks shall I return to Thee?**

**Were earth a thousand times as fair,  
Beset with gold and jewels rare,  
She yet were far too poor to be  
A narrow cradle, Lord, for Thee.**

**Ah, dearest Jesus, Holy Child !  
Make Thee a bed, soft, undefiled,  
Within my heart, that it may be  
A quiet chamber kept for Thee.**

**Praise God upon His heavenly  
throne,  
Who gave to us His only Son :  
For this His hosts, on joyful wing,  
A blest New Year of mercy sing.**

## Jesus, the Joy-Bringer

**T**HE music of Christmas carols is heard in our homes, and the chimes of Christmas bells are filling the air. It is a beautiful fact that the coming of our Lord to earth and the closing days of His earthly life with His disciples are described as seasons of joy. When the angel appeared to the shepherd at Bethlehem, he said: "I bring you tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." No such ecstatic song of gladness had ever been heard before in this old sinning and sobbing world. As our Saviour came

into the world amid songs, so His last days with His Disciples, before His ascension, were marked with gladness likewise. The little band are gathered in that historic "upper room" in Jerusalem, and the doors are shut. Suddenly the Master stands before them. They break out into such delight that they quite upset their faith, for we are told that they "believed not for joy and wonder." Jesus sits down among them in the old familiar fashion, and converses with them, and breathes on them the sweetness of His benediction. "Then were the disciples glad when they saw their Lord." They are no longer bereaved; their sorrow is turned to joy; Jesus is once more among them, the same loving friend, teacher, Redeemer and Elder Brother. This happy song sounds like a renewal of the strains of gladness that had filled the skies above Bethlehem three and thirty years before.

**We often speak of our Divine Master as a Man of Sorrows, and this is true; but let us think of Him also as a joy-bringer. He came into the world not to condemn the world, but that the world, through Him, might be saved. The cross brought indescribable agony to Christ, but joy to others. Oh, in how many ways is He a bringer of gladness! Every sinner, as soon as he feels the sting of his guilt, becomes miserable. Nothing cuts like sin, and the soul convicted is, for the time, a wretched soul. There is a story of a rich employer whose most skillful artisan began to fall off in his work. The master spoke to his steward or superintendent about it, and the steward replied: "It is no wonder the poor fellow cannot turn out good work; his hands tremble so that he cannot manage his tools, and his eyes are often full of tears; a heavy debt is pressing him so that he is tempted**

to drink in order to drown his sorrows. While that debt hangs over him you need not expect him to produce any good work." "Then," replied the generous employer, "go and tell him his debt is paid." From that hour he was a changed man, and his work was done better than ever before. The guilty soul can never work for God or enjoy any lightsomeness of conscience until its debt to the Divine Justice is paid, and the load is lifted off. The atoning blood of Jesus pays that debt, and when the penitent heart accepts Jesus, then light and joy break in. It is a Christmas carol all over again. It is not only to the new convert that the Christmas Christ is a joy-bringer; He is the best of our comforters in the time of trouble. My dear friends, there is an inner chamber, a sanctum in our hearts, of which we are loath to surrender the key to the dearest friend. With the joys or the griefs

felt there, a stranger intermeddled not. Sometimes that inner chamber of the heart becomes dark and dreary and lonesome. One enters through the closed doors; and oh, how sweetly sounds the voice of love, — “Peace be unto you!” He shows us the scars of His sacrifice. He opens the casket of His precious promises. At such times of communion it is He who giveth the welcome, and it produceth sweetness in our bruised spirits. His consolations fill the soul with their joyous perfume. We lean on His bosom as the “beloved disciple” did; and we can say, with happy assurance, “My beloved is mine, and I am His. Whom have I in Heaven but Thee; there is none on earth whom I desire beside Thee.” Then are we glad, because we have had a visit from our Lord.

The more we have of Christ’s presence, the more serenely peaceful

and content we become. An empty heart is always wretched. Wealth, fame, worldly success cannot satisfy an immortal spirit when he looks at them in the light that conscience flashes on them or which a glimpse of eternity can give. "Is this all?" whispers the uneasy heart to itself; but the true believer inventories his spiritual treasures, and often in the hardest of hard times can say: "Christ is mine; I am a joint heir with Him of the most magnificent of inheritances." Joy is simply love looking at its treasures. A Christian's joy is in loving Christ and in loving other people because Christ loves them; it is in doing good to others, and so having a Christmas perpetually. It is in looking forward to that world of glory where we shall be like Him, and shall see Him as He is. "Where I am," is a sweet assurance, "ye shall be also." Jesus offers to fill our homes and

our hearts with joy, if we will only let Him do it. We cannot create canary birds, but we can provide cages and food for them, and fill our dwellings with their music. Even so we cannot create the spiritual gifts and blessings which the Christmas Jesus offers; but they are ours if we provide heart-room for them. The birds of peace and praise and joy will fly in fast enough if we only set the doors and windows of our soul wide open for the Joy-Bringing Christ.

“Admit Him, for the human breast  
Ne'er entertained so sweet a guest.  
Admit Him, and you will not expel,  
For where He comes, He comes to  
dwell.”



## Carol, Brothers, Carol

**C**AROL, brothers, carol,  
Carol joyfully ;  
Carol the good tidings,  
Carol merrily ;  
And pray a gladsome Christmas  
For all good Christian men.  
Carol, brothers, carol,  
Christmas comes again.

Carol ye with gladness,  
Not in songs of earth ;  
On the Saviour's birthday,  
Hallowed be our mirth.  
While a thousand blessings  
Fill our hearts with glee,

**Christmas-day we'll keep, the  
Feast of Charity !**

**At the joyous table,  
Think of those who've none,—  
The orphan and the widow,  
Hungry and alone.  
Bountiful your offerings,  
To the altar bring ;  
Let the poor and needy  
Christmas carols sing.**

**Listening angel-music,  
Discord sure must cease ;  
Who dare hate his brother,  
On this day of peace ?  
While the heavens are telling  
To mankind good-will,  
Only love and kindness  
Every bosom fill.**

**Let our hearts, responding  
To the seraph band,  
Wish this morning's sunshine  
Bright in every land !**

**Word and deed and prayer  
Speed the grateful sound,  
Bidding merry Christmas  
All the world around.**

**Rev. William A. Muhlenberg, D.D.**

# Home-Thoughts for Christmastide

**C**HRISTMASTIDE is the season of family festivities — the time when we especially prize the joys and sanctity of home. God intended, when He made us, that we should live in families; it is the only way that the two sexes can come together without impairing virtue and purity. There is no such school of true religion on the globe as a well-governed, God-honoring home; it underlies both the Church and the Commonwealth. The most primitive of all churches is “the church in the house.” There stands

the domestic altar; there is felt the Christian culture which moulds character from the cradle clear on to the Judgment-Seat. It is the nursery of the noblest lives; it is the earliest and the surest preparation for that home "not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Out from many an humble farm-house, which had only a calico curtain in the window and a rag-carpet on the floor, has graduated the noblest manhood that has ruled in Church and State, or gone on foreign missions to the heathen world. Abraham Lincoln said that he owed all that was best in him to his loving mother; the candle that shone so brightly in the Kentucky log-cabin shed its light over our land and over the world.

Our business men, both in the great cities and in the villages, ought to feel more the claims of home and household. Many of them live in

an atmosphere of excitement, and bake their bread in a pretty hot oven. They need the cooling down which a quiet home can give; and there is the place to spend, not only time, but a good portion of their honest gains. To every man of business I would say: Make your home attractive in every way possible. Put into it every adornment that you can honestly afford: Books, musical instruments and pictures are good investments, but if you economize in other things, indulge in the wise luxury of cheerful, open fires. A glowing fire kindles cheerfulness, and is often "a means of grace" to the children. It warms the affections and creates a bright heart-shrine. At that fireside spend as many evenings as you can, if you want to keep your children from dangerous amusements, or places of evil resort. If you come back from business wearied or despond-

ent, let your daughter's piano be to your ruffled spirits what David's harp was to the distempered mind of Saul. A good romp with your children, or an hour spent with them over their lessons, will make you love them all the more and may expel the "blue devils" of worldly care. When I received the sons of one of my neighbors into my church, and congratulated him on the excellent character of his boys, his reply was: "They are turning out well, for I have always anchored them to their homes."

To have such a home you must make it. To keep it what it ought to be you must set your face against the many enemies of a pure and happy home. Sometimes one of its enemies is the clubhouse; for club life is becoming increasingly popular in our land. Unquestionably there are many clubs whose object is not only cultivation of a pure and

elevating sociality, but also literary or scientific improvement. I enter upon no tirade against every possible character of club. At the same time it is undeniable that in a very large number of clubs, wine, cigars, cards and convivial suppers are the prominent attractions. A friend of mine, who lived opposite to a clubhouse of very respectable social grade, told me that it made him heart-sick to see the number of gentlemen who made it their perpetual evening resort, and the late hours at which all the windows were in full blaze. I happen to know that several thousands of dollars were spent annually for intoxicating drinks. Whatever may be said for those unfortunates who have no home or household, yet true it is that the club is often the last place for a man of family to frequent; for it is the rival, and sometimes the fatal antagonist, of his home. Good wives are jealous



of all rivals with a righteous jealousy. A true, loving wife has a right to her husband's evening hours. The children have a right to their father's sympathetic attention, and it would seem to be a dictate of love in the parent, to take wife and children with him to places of attraction and proper entertainment rather than to take himself constantly to self-indulgence in his clubhouse.

It goes without saying that a saloon and every drinking resort is a most deadly enemy of the home ; the more it is decorated the more is it dangerous. To multitudes of our young men and to a vast number of the humbler laboring classes it becomes a chandeliered and crimson gateway to hell. But all drinking habits are not formed in dram-shops, billiard rooms or other drinking resorts. A vast number of young men take their first drink and form their

appetite for it at the parents' table, or at social parties in private houses. I once officiated at a wedding where there was a popping of champagne corks like a discharge of musketry. Not long afterwards I was called to labor for the reformation of an intemperate son in that very family; his parents had been his tempters. Mr. Gough, the celebrated temperance advocate, told me that he was once sent for by the mistress of an elegant mansion to consult with her as to what could be done for the reformation of her son who had been brought home by a policeman, on the previous evening, in a wretched state of intoxication. He said to her: "Madam, do you ever put wine or any intoxicant on your table?" Her reply was: "Of course I do as other people in my sphere of society are in the habit of doing." "Then," he replied to her, "you have possibly taught him the habit that is now working

his destruction and breaking your heart." The father who puts the bottle on his table, and the lady of the house who, from false slavery to fashion, provides intoxicants for her guests, are playing with fire. If anyone forms the drinking habit, or is strengthened in such habit through their temptation, are they not, before God, responsible for the fatal mischief that is wrought? I have found that a family pledge to total abstinence, hanging on the wall, is the most ornamental piece of furniture in many a dwelling.

The enemies of which I have spoken are some of them outside of our own doors; but very often a man's foes, and sometimes a wife's foes, are "they of his (or her) own household." Where do most men find their greatest help or their greatest hindrance to success in their business? I confidently answer, at home. Good management

and frugality there are apt to mean prosperity. Extravagance there means vexation, temptation to recklessness or business gambings, and too often financial ruin. Many a married man who has practiced swindling has been pushed on to it either by a wicked mistress or by an extravagant wife or family. After all, if a good wife is the best of all earthly friends, there is another sort that may become the most fatal of enemies.

Where lies the sorest sorrow that disturbs the heart-peace and sullies the lustre of worldly gains or honors? It is sometimes found in the worm that lies at the root of home life. Of little account is it to a man who prospers in his store, his counting room or office, or his pulpit, if he is an unhappy man at his own hearth-stone. On the other hand, a wife can bear any stroke of adversity — she can bear to be ignored by

“society” — if her husband is only loving and true and their children are always affectionate and obedient. But unkindness at the hearthstone is a dry sorrow that drinks the heart’s blood. The most severe wounds are sometimes inflicted by the hands that ought to clasp our own the most closely. Wedlock, as many of us can faithfully testify, means the sweetest joy that life can know. But woe be to him whose enemies are they of his own household!

Good Philip Henry said that he and his wife adopted a rule that only one of them would ever get provoked at the same time. That “scotched” the serpent of conjugal quarrels. Another equally good rule is to always allow fifteen minutes to pass before any reply is ever made to an irritating remark. All that sort of little vipers in the home nest that are fatal to domestic happiness can

be exterminated by persistent, devoted, unselfish, forbearing, all-conquering love. When husband and wife make common cause in enthroning the Christmas Christ over their household, and in barring out the enemies that threaten the peace or the purity of their home, domestic life becomes as sweet as a song and as holy as a sacrament. In such a home the Christmas candles burn all the year round, and "the church in the house" becomes the beautiful preparation for and the prelude to the great family circle in the realms of glory.

# What Star Is This?

Translated from the Latin, by Rev. J. Chandler,  
Hymns of the Primitive Church.

**W**HAT star is this, with beams  
so bright,  
Which shames the sun's less  
radiant light?

It shines to announce a new-born  
King,—  
Glad tidings of our God to bring.

'T is now fulfilled what God de-  
creed,—  
“From Jacob shall a Star proceed”:  
And lo! the Eastern sages stand,  
To read in heaven the Lord's com-  
mand.

While outward signs the star displays,  
An inward light the Lord conveys,  
And urges them, with force benign,  
To seek the giver of the sign.

True love can brook no dull delay,  
Nor toil nor dangers stop their way :  
Home, kindred, fatherland, and all,  
They leave at once, at God's high  
call.

O Jesu, while the star of grace  
Invites us now to seek Thy face,  
May we no more that grace repel,  
Or quench that light which shines  
so well !

To God the Father, God the Son,  
And Holy Spirit, Three in One,  
May every tongue and nation raise  
An endless song of thankful praise !



## The Star of Bethlehem that Never Sets

**S**OME astronomers conjecture that Alcyone is the center around which the whole Sidereal system revolves. Whether that be true or not, it is undeniably certain that the Star of Bethlehem is the center of this world's spiritual astronomy. If that star had never risen on a dark and sin-cursed world, oh, how different its history would read! That Christmas night brought Christ; with Christ came the Gospel of human brotherhood and the elevation of woman. With Christ came the highest civilization,

and the purest philanthropy; with Christ came the marvelous atoning sacrifice for sin; with Christ came victory over death and the grave; with Him came the "exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Innumerable hallelujahs before the Throne have taken their pitch from the angels' song over the little village in Judea.

That star was the only star of guidance to all the innumerable hosts of the redeemed. "Neither is there salvation in any other." His very name, Jesus, signifies Saviour; the very core of that Gospel born at Bethlehem is, "Whosoever believeth on Him shall be saved." The keynote of every pulpit that deserves to stand is, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation: that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Every sort of preaching stales except that preaching; and no pulpit loses its power which

exalts the sin-atoning Lamb of God. And not only is weak, sinful man guided by that star to his only place of pardon, but he finds in it the only unerring guide to a noble, pure, unselfish life. In all our questions of moral conduct we have but to inquire what Christ said upon that point. How did He act? What would He have me to do? We always get our right bearings when we steer by that light. Conscience only becomes infallible when it reflects Christ's instructions and Christ's example.

The curse and crime of infidelity is that it aims to extinguish the Star of Bethlehem and to overthrow the lighthouse on Calvary. The band of wreckers who should extinguish that great lantern on Fire Island and then hoist a false light elsewhere to decoy New York bound vessels to destruction would be merciful in comparison with the skeptics

who are striving to destroy man's faith in man's only Saviour. A cultured scholar once told an Episcopal bishop that he had read a great number of infidel books and that they might have made him a skeptic but for three considerations. "First," he said, "I am a man; I am going somewhere. I have read all these books can tell me and they shed not a solitary ray of light on the darkness. They shall not take away my only guide and leave me stone blind. Secondly, I had a mother. I saw her go down into the dark valley where I am going, and she leaned upon an unseen arm as calmly as a child goes to sleep on the breast of its mother. That was not a dream. Thirdly, I have three motherless daughters. They have no protector but myself, and I would rather see them die than leave them in this sinful world if you should blot out from it all the teachings of Christ's Gos-

pel." Well might that thoughtful man declare that nothing sheds a solitary ray of light on the darkness of this life and the mysteries of the future world except the revelations of Jesus Christ.

What a comfortless world this would be without it! We ministers are suddenly summoned to the chamber of sickness, often to a bed of death. For one, I am ready to say, I would not dare to venture into such a responsible situation if I could not carry a Bible and the offer of a Saviour promised by the Divine Comforter with me. That precious Fourteenth Chapter of John is a lamp that I have often held aloft in the room of sickness and the house of mourning. Some of us know for ourselves what such promises mean; we have had God's truth pricked into our hearts and memories by sharp experience. To many of my readers this closing year has been a

year of darkened homes and perhaps of dying beds. In some of your nurseries there may be an empty crib. In some of your dwellings there may be an empty chair at the Christmas table that makes your heart ache. No human consolation is even a rushlight. Every attempted comfort that fails to satisfy the yearnings of your deepest spiritual nature is a will-o'-the-wisp — an utter mockery. We want a certainty made of the mysteries that overhang death and eternity. Is there any heaven-kindled, infallible, unchangeable light that can penetrate into and illuminate the unseen world? Yes, thanks be to God! the Star of Bethlehem is also the star of Bethany's home and rocky sepulchre. "I am the resurrection and the life." "I will not leave you comfortless. I go to prepare a place for you, and will receive you unto myself." These are the sweet consolations that float

with Celestial melody into our houses of sorrow; and our faith, recognizing a truly Divine voice, answers back:

“ My Jesus, as thou wilt,  
Though seen through many a tear,  
Let not my star of hope  
Grow dim or disappear.  
Through sorrow or through woe,  
Conduct me as Thine own,  
And help me still to say:  
My Lord, ‘Thy will be done.’ ”

This old, sobbing world of ours is one year older than it was when the last Christmas carol was chanted. It has had another twelve months of experiments and experiences; of advancement on many lines of human research, scientific discovery and acquisition. But it has not outgrown Jesus Christ. For Him it has discovered no substitute. The Star of Bethlehem is the only star

that never sets. Jesus Christ alone can satisfy all human necessities and the loftiest of human aspirations. Christianity was constructed to be the only universal religion, for it is the only one adapted to all ages of life, to all human conditions, to all races and all nationalities. Other lights have risen, waned and vanished forever. The Greek mythology is as utterly shattered to ruin as its own splendid Parthenon. The chief religions of Asia, Brahminical, Buddhist or Moslem, are all limited and all local; in many quarters they are moribund; while they make no inroads on Christianity. The religion of Bethlehem and Calvary makes constant inroads upon them. The systems of error, which Paul and Peter fought, have vanished out of sight; and the whole Orient is catching glimpses of the star that first dawned over Judea's sky. In spiritual dynamics blood tells; and



God has intrusted His glorious Gospel to the most powerful races now on the globe.

To the brightness of Bethlehem's Star all the nations of the earth shall yet be attracted. The rulers of the darkness of this world shall prepare to abdicate for Jesus Christ. He who bore this world's curse will, by and by, wear its crown; and this Twentieth Century, shod with the sandals of foreign missions, is one of the forerunners of the King. Every system of error, every delusion and skepticism, shall yet pall and vanish out of sight before the Gospel of atoning love which restores fallen man to a forgiving and accepting God. The songs which filled that first Christmas night shall yet be heard with richer harmonies over a whole ransomed world. The skeptics who shut their eyes to the light will be compelled to witness the blazing splendors of Him who "standeth

upon His throne” and receives the homage of the myriads whom He has brought home to glory. This world’s six days of turmoil and toil and travail shall end in a Sabbath of eternal rest and praise. “Even so, come, Lord Jesus! Come quickly!”

# A Christmas Carmen

## I.

**S**OUND over all waters, reach  
out from all lands,  
The chorus of voices, the clasp-  
ing of hands ;  
Sing hymns that were sung by the  
stars of the morn,  
Sing songs of the angels when Jesus  
was born !  
With glad jubilations  
Bring hope to the nations !  
The dark night is ending and dawn  
has begun :  
Rise, hope of the ages, arise like the  
sun,  
All speech flow to music, all hearts  
beat as one !

## II.

Sing the bridal of nations! with  
chorals of love  
Sing out the war-vulture and sing  
in the dove,  
Till the hearts of the peoples keep  
time in accord,  
And the voice of the world is the  
voice of the Lord!  
Clasp hands of the nations  
In strong gratulations:  
The dark night is ending and dawn  
has begun;  
Rise, hope of the ages, arise like the  
sun,  
All speech flow to music, all hearts  
beat as one!

## III.

Blow, bugles of battle, the marches  
of peace;  
East, west, north, and south let the  
long quarrel cease:  
Sing the song of great joy that the  
angels began,

Sing of glory to God and of good-  
will to man !  
Hark ! joining in chorus  
The heavens bend o'er us !  
The dark night is ending and dawn  
has begun ;  
Rise, hope of the ages, arise like the  
sun,  
All speech flow to music, all hearts  
beat as one !

John G. Whittier.

## Back to Christ

**I**N these days we often hear the slogan sounded, "Back to Christ!" Whatever may be the peculiar meaning, or the purpose of these utterances, there is a happy appropriateness in these words at the Christmas season. They point us back to the days of that wondrous scene in Bethlehem when the shepherds, coming to the lowly stable beneath the crowded inn, discovered "a babe lying in a manger." That that infant, wrapped in its swaddling clothes, was the actual incarnate Son of God manifest in human form is a mystery that at first sight overwhelms us. We

cannot fathom it or understand it; nor is it necessary that we should. I cannot fathom or explain just *how* that tree before my window has been growing during the last summer; but I accept the *fact* of its growth. So with the unfathomable marvel of the Incarnation. With the *modus* of it, or the how it takes place, we are not required to have any faith at all; simply we are to believe the revealed truth, that the infant Jesus was the Son of God, who had become man and continued to be God and man in two distinct natures, but in one personage. From Bethlehem on to the Ascension Mount, He claims divinity; and every word, every step, every act of His confirmed the claim. After nineteen centuries the unanimous verdict of Christians only echoes the testimony of that Centurion before the cross: "Truly this was the Son of God."

As we go back to the wonderful scene at Bethlehem we discover that a name was given to the Divine Child — He is called “Jesus,” “for He shall save His people from their sins.” They called Him “Saviour.” That sacred, precious name carries us, with a bound, from Bethlehem to Calvary — from the manger to the cross. That the newly born babe was yet to be an infinitely wise teacher, and an infinitely compassionate healer, and an infinitely perfect guide to us all was not enough ; He must be a Saviour from the condemnation and the power of sin, or else the supreme purpose of the incarnation fails. Mark you how that fearful word “sin” flashes and flames out from that Bethlehem-manger! It reveals the terrible fact of human guiltiness, of wandering from God and therefore of retribution. That pulpit and that Sabbath school commit a fatal mistake when



they belittle that word "sin." It is a mistake that lies at the bottom of a vast deal of shallow and unsound teaching in our days. If sin be not utterly condemnable why should the Son of God shed His blood on the cross to save us from its clutch and its condemnation?

Observe, too, how close alongside the ghastly word "sin" gleams out that glorious word "saved." We seem to be hearing already the sweet bells of redeeming love ringing over that manger in which the infant Jesus slumbers. The "faithful saying" starts then and there, which Paul afterwards shouted at the top of his voice, that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." This is a message for the times. From the days of Luther on to the days of the Wesleys, and from their day on to the days of Spurgeon, that pulpit that had the most of the "power from on high" was the one

which rung out the most clearly the glorious evangel of the atonement. Tear that vital truth out of Christianity and you reduce it to an excellent system of morality, but it will be nothing more. Even Bethlehem's manger never would have existed if there were to be no cross on Calvary.

I am well aware of the fact that some who employ this formula "Back to Christ" use it to minimize, and in some cases to disparage entirely, the teaching of the inspired apostles. They fasten upon these utterances of our Master, which we call the "Sermon on the Mount," as the condensed creed and the entire constitution of Christianity. Have these good people never read a certain remarkable conversation with a Jewish ruler who came to Jesus by night as a searcher after truth? That evening the Divine Teacher dropped His plummet into the deep

things—into the great truths that reach into eternity. He told Nicodemus of sin and its consequences. He told him about the redeeming love of God — “soon I am to be lifted up as Moses lifted aloft the brazen serpent.” He told him of the necessity of regeneration by the Holy Spirit. He revealed to him the glories of “eternal life,” and showed him the road to heaven. A wonderful “inquiry-meeting” was that; and the fruit of it appeared when Nicodemus brought his sweet spices to the crucified body of his Lord. Now all these core-truths make up the warp and woof of the inspired teaching of Paul and Peter and John. Instead of being a Pauline and Petrine and Johannine theology, they are simply Jesus Christ’s theology; for these apostles were Christ’s spokesmen. He had promised them, “I am with you always,” and that His Spirit would guide them

into all truth. "Back to Christ" ought to mean nothing less than a return to everything which our Master taught us, both by His own tongue and by His divinely inspired representatives and witnesses.

Seldom has a Christmas day dawned upon us when there was more need to turn our eyes and thoughts Christward. During this year another Conference has been held to promote the principles of righteous arbitration instead of appeals to the sword; but the year closes with some conflicts in which two or three nations are engaged, with loud threatenings of other conflicts; and the music of Christmas bells mingles with the roar of artillery. Amid all the unceasing conflicts between labor and capital, the one principle which alone can bring permanent and satisfactory settlement is the acceptance by both parties, and all parties, of Christ's cardinal teach-

ing—the Golden Rule. Every leader of humanity must pray that this opening century may witness new advents and new triumphs of the Prince of Peace. There has been, over our land, for some time past, a lamentable dearth of revivals in the churches. Business still thrives;—wealth has increased of late to a most phenomenal extent;—our country is becoming enormously, and almost dangerously, rich; but the vital business of winning hearts and lives to Jesus Christ has somewhat slackened. Pastors and people are raising in many quarters the practical question: “What shall we do?” The answer would seem to be in three words: “Back to Christ.” Jesus in our homes, not only on Christmas day but every day, would revive household piety, establish family altars, sweeten the fireside, counteract the growing rage for fashion and frivolities, and bring

the children into the Master's fold. Jesus Christ in the consciences of His rich followers would check the mania for overgrown wealth, and teach the rich how to use the money they have for the benefit of God's poor, ignorant and suffering children. Back to Bethlehem's manger among the poor! Back to Calvary's cross to save sinners!

The great want in the church, in society and in civil life, in the pulpit and the pew, and everywhere else, is JESUS CHRIST. With Him everything; without Him nothing! The gift that includes all gifts, the blessing that enwraps all blessings, is a present Saviour, working in us as a conqueror of sin, as a converting power, as a refiner, as a comforter and as a quickener.

A personal Jesus accepted means salvation; a personal Jesus obeyed is sanctification; a personal Jesus followed is a life of brotherly kind-

ness and true philanthropy; a personal Jesus reigning in the heart is the fulness of peace and joy and power. The bells of Bethlehem ring one note; the Christmas carols are all calling aloud the same note: "Back to Christ!" "Back to Christ!"

# It Came Upon the Midnight Clear

**I**T came upon the midnight clear,  
That glorious song of old,  
From angels bending near the  
earth  
To touch their harps of gold :  
“Peace to the earth, good-will to  
men  
From heaven’s all-gracious King!”  
The world in solemn stillness lay  
To hear the angels sing.

Still through the cloven skies they  
come,  
With peaceful wings unfurled ;  
And still their heavenly music floats  
O’er all the weary world ;



Above its sad and lowly plains  
They bend on heavenly wing,  
And ever o'er its Babel sounds  
The blessed angels sing.

Yet with the woes of sin and strife  
The world has suffered long ;  
Beneath the angel-strain have rolled  
Two thousand years of wrong ;  
And men, at war with men, hear not  
The love-song which they bring :  
Oh ! hush the noise, ye men of strife,  
And hear the angels sing !

And ye, beneath life's crushing load  
Whose forms are bending low ;  
Who toil along the climbing way  
With painful steps and slow,—  
Look now ! for glad and golden  
hours  
Come swiftly on the wing :  
Oh ! rest beside the weary road,  
And hear the angels sing !

For lo ! the days are hastening on,  
By prophet bards foretold,

**When with the ever-circling years  
Comes round the age of gold ;  
When Peace shall over all the earth  
Its ancient splendors fling,  
And the whole world send back the  
song  
Which now the angels sing.  
Rev. Edmund H. Sears, D. D.**

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